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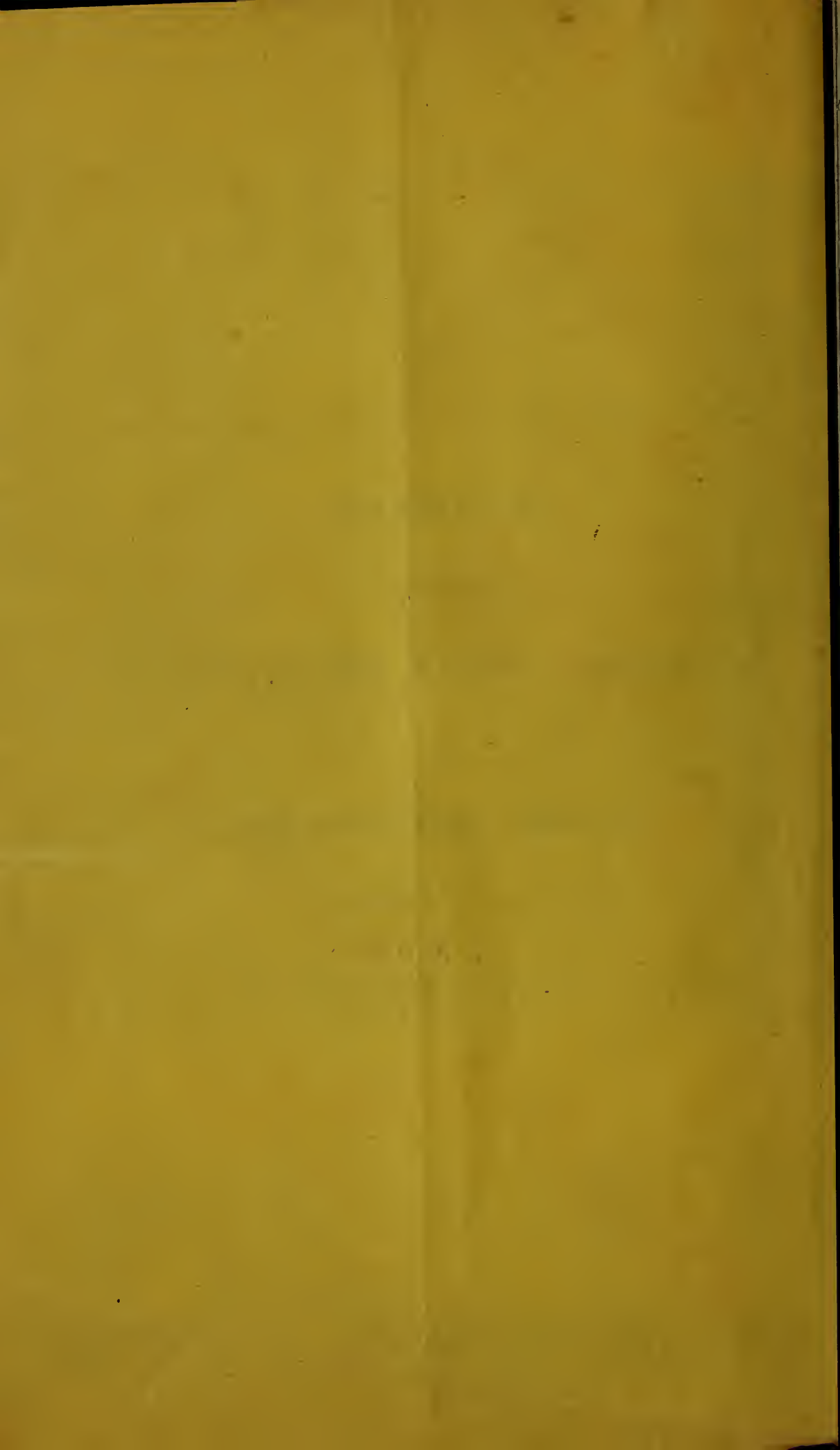
TRUSTEES, FACULTY, AND STUDENTS,

OF

La Fayette College, Easton, Pa.

BY WILLIAM RAWLE.

1836



AN ADDRESS,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

TRUSTEES, FACULTY, AND STUDENTS,

OF

LA FAYETTE COLLEGE, EASTON, PA.

AT ITS FIRST COMMENCEMENT FOR CONFERRING DEGREES,

On the 22d of September, 1836.

BY WILLIAM RAWLE.



PHILADELPHIA:
JOSEPH AND WILLIAM KITE, PRINTERS,
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1836.

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EASTON, *September 23, 1836.*

DEAR SIR,

The Trustees of La Fayette College respectfully request you to furnish for publication, a copy of the able and eloquent Address which you yesterday delivered before the Trustees, Faculty, and Students of the institution.

I am, most respectfully,

Yours,

J. M. PORTER, *President.*

WILLIAM RAWLE, Esq.

PHILADELPHIA, *September 28, 1836.*

DEAR SIR,

The request of the Trustees of La Fayette College conveyed through you, of a copy of the Address delivered by me on the 22d instant, before the Trustees, Faculty, and Students of that institution, is too flattering not to be at once acceded to. The Address is entirely at their disposal.

I am, very respectfully and truly,

Yours,

WILLIAM RAWLE.

JAMES M. PORTER, Esq.

ADDRESS.

THE revolution of time has brought round a period, which will ever be marked in the history of this institution. It now first dawns upon the world, giving a flattering promise of what its day shall bring forth. Hitherto, all has been preparation—active, laborious, and anxious—sometimes almost paralyzed by difficulties, which seemed to baffle effort;—sometimes, cheered and invigorated by the prospect of success—always struggling with obstacles which nothing but energy and perseverance could overcome. But the events of this day add another page to the records of all times and of all countries to prove, that under the benign influence of that Providence which favours and fosters every thing that deserves to succeed, energy and perseverance, prompted by virtuous motives and directed to virtuous ends, like Faith can remove mountains.

It is now more than ten years, since a few patriotic and public spirited men of this immediate neighbourhood, deeply sensible of the vital importance of diffusing the lights of education through our rapidly growing community, and of the vast disproportion between the wants and the means of mental culture; measuring their efforts rather by the magnitude and importance of their undertaking, than by their immediate resources to carry it into successful operation, but resting their hope on the support of an enlightened and liberal community, laid the foundations of an institution, whose honours are now for the first time to be conferred.

The seed was then planted—the fruit is now to be plucked. The soil which received that seed, was favourable to its

growth; but chilling frosts, and the want of refreshing showers, for a time prevented its expansion—it was long before the germ burst forth and showed its tender shoots above the ground; but, at length, warmed by the life-giving beams of the sun, and nourished by the balmy breath of a genial atmosphere, it yields its first fruits to reward the toils of the husbandman. Those fruits, fair, beautiful, and delicious, are but assurances of the more abundant harvest, which each successive year shall produce.

The original design of this institution, differed materially from that which was afterwards adopted. The number of valuable and accomplished men with whom the great national establishment at West Point had adorned the ranks of civil, of scientific, and of military life, as well as the pre-eminent success which had attended some more private institutions, upon which a military character had been impressed, induced in the founders of La Fayette College the wish, to blend with the study of the arts of war, the peaceful pursuits of science and literature.

The charter, therefore, from which, on the 9th of March, 1826, it derived its existence, provided, that in addition to those branches of education which are usually taught in our higher seminaries of learning, the students should be instructed in military science, tactics, and engineering. The plan, however, did not succeed. Whether an opinion had gone abroad that the country was already sufficiently provided with military schools, or the tranquil shades in which this temple was to be reared, were unfit scenes of preparation for “war, the son of hell, whom angry heavens do make their minister,” or whether, in connexion with other causes, the want of that alimant which public patronage alone can bestow, prevented its early and healthy growth, the languishing and sickly infant had nearly closed its brief and useless existence, when an event occurred which brought it into renovated and active life.

An academy in which the mechanic arts and agricultural labour were united with intellectual improvement, had for

some time been established in the populous village of Germantown, within a few miles of the metropolis of the state. From causes, however, entirely unconnected with its essential character and peculiar objects, its success had not corresponded with the hopes of those by whom it was founded. It was sinking under a disease, incident, perhaps, in a great degree, to its situation; and it was deemed essential to translate it to another and more congenial spot, in order to preserve it from an early grave. The familiar, but beautiful figure was here strikingly illustrated, that the darkest passages of life, frequently usher in its most brilliant periods, as the deepest gloom of night is said to be the harbinger of the dawn of day. At a moment of cheerless despondency, when the struggle seemed to be nearly over, and their last sigh about to be drawn, an union of these institutions called into existence, one which was destined to effect, what their separate efforts could not accomplish. By a happy arrangement, the trustees of La Fayette College were enabled, not only to secure the services of the accomplished and able head of the manual labour academy, but to transfer the whole institution to a position admirably fitted for the development of its principles; and to enable them more completely to give effect to those principles, a supplement to their charter, granted on the 27th of April, 1832, authorized them "to dispense with the maintenance and observance of military discipline, and with the teaching of military science and tactics, and civil and military engineering." The character of the institution being thus changed; the sword being, in a manner, turned into the ploughshare, and the spear into the pruning hook, the happiest results soon followed. Although confined within the narrow limits of a small spot of ground; with buildings ill calculated for those operations which this system of education required; without many of the necessary implements of labour, and with resources wholly inadequate to supply these deficiencies, the advantages, nevertheless, of the system, were soon discovered in the increased number of students it attracted, and the high

degree of physical, moral, and intellectual improvement, to which they attained. From that period, although many serious obstacles have beset its path, the institution has advanced with a steady and accelerated step, in a career of usefulness and reputation. Emboldened by the success which had thus attended their efforts, its friends felt themselves justified in enlarging its boundaries and extending its sphere of action. The little farm which had been the scene of its infant labours, was too confined for its enlarged growth and increasing strength. It required more room for the exertion of its activity and the development of its powers; and for the purpose of giving the fullest scope to an experiment, which, if fairly made, they knew could not fail, the Trustees determined to give to the institution all the advantages resulting from a permanent establishment, by the purchase of appropriate grounds and the erection of suitable buildings. The undertaking was a bold one, but the event has justified the enterprise. Assisted, less by the liberal contributions which a few devoted friends of education bestowed, and the support derived from legislative bounty, than by the favourable impression which merited success had made upon the public mind, they have raised these sacred halls, amid scenes, whose enchanting loveliness, the divine pencil of a CLAUDE alone could portray. If it be true, that the mind receives its impressions from external objects, and the emotions of the soul participate in the character of the scenes by which it is surrounded, these lofty and majestic mountains, bathing their rugged heads in the floating clouds; these fertile and beautiful valleys, stretching beyond the reach of human vision, loaded with the rich products of agricultural labour, and presenting the captivating picture of industry and happiness; these broad and silvery streams, bursting through abrupt precipices, or gliding between peaceful shores, and bearing on their bosoms incalculable wealth, must drive from the ingenuous minds of youth all selfish and ignoble thoughts, and give to them that elevation of soul, those "immortal longings" which best qualify them to fill the ex-

alted character which belongs to a patriotic citizen of this great Republic.

By a judicious and well arranged union of the arts of industry, with scientific and literary studies in their various departments, La Fayette College now offers to the rising generation as extensive a field for intellectual improvement, as any of her sister institutions, while the healthful pursuits of mechanical and agricultural labour, preserve the youthful constitution from the wasting effects of mental exertion, and at the same time give to the mind that strength and independence, which always result from the proud consciousness of self-support. Among those sister institutions she now takes her stand, and this day sends forth into the world, her first offspring, to play their part in the great drama of life.

Let us pause for a moment at the threshold, and carry our minds forward to the scenes in which they are about to mingle. In a few years passed in preparation for the several pursuits for which they are destined, those who are now bidding adieu to the shades of the academy, "*templa quam delecta*," will be launched on the broad ocean of the world; and whether they shall enter it from the work-shop of the mechanic, the laborious fields of agriculture, the counting-house of the merchant, the lecture room of the physician, the office of the lawyer, or the study of the divine, unless the lessons they have learned here, have been inculcated in vain, the same star will be their guide over its tempestuous and dangerous waters. However various their condition in life, and however diversified their private tastes, pursuits, duties, and responsibilities, all are bound alike to their country, and all have a right to claim a participation in its concerns. It is the peculiar blessing of this favoured land, that there is no hereditary claim to distinction; no exclusion by birth from its highest stations. He who would enjoy the honours of his ancestors, must inherit their virtues as well as their name.

"He cannot borrow merit from the dead,
Himself an undeserver."—Rowe.

In other countries, the avenues to success are nearly closed, except to those who can present a passport, purchased by any other merit than their own; but here, the broad highway is open to all—all may press forward in the race, but he only can hope to reach the goal, who relies on his own strength and his own exertions to carry him through.

The sentiment of patriotism belongs almost exclusively to a republic. There seems to be an instinctive feeling in the human breast, which every where breaks through the selfish barriers by which it is encompassed, and seeks an abiding place in something connected with country. Where the monarch is the fountain of honour, and the centre of power, he is too often substituted for the country over which he sways his sceptre; and loyalty usurps the place of a nobler feeling. How many examples does history record, of self-devotion to a sovereign, whose only claim to the sacrifice was, that he was the acknowledged head and representative of his people. The soul that could rouse itself to heroism for a king, would become god-like in the cause of country. The history of the civilized world proves, that it is only where the spirit of man is free, and acknowledges no master but the laws whose protection he enjoys, that public virtue finds room for its highest efforts. Such has been the experience of antiquity, which, until our own great experiment was made, furnished all we knew of republics. And if the little states of Greece, with their petty interests and limited powers, could inspire with this sacred feeling, EPAMINONDAS, PELOPIDAS, CIMON, PHOCION, THEMISTOCLES, and all that band of heroes and patriots whose lives form the brightest pages in the annals of their country; and the impure republican institutions of Rome, encumbered by the splendor of consular and senatorial dignity, and oppressed by the weight of patrician power, could call into action the exalted virtues and heroic devotion of a CAMILLUS, a SCIPIO, and a CATO, how much more elevated are the motives, how much more noble the objects, presented to the mind of a citizen of these United States.

Ours is the only age, and ours the only country, in which the rights of man have been made the original basis of government. The birth of most other nations, is lost in the mists of antiquity, and their history fabulous or real, is illustrated or disgraced by the barbarous virtues or disgusting vices of heroes or tyrants. If, from time to time, a ray of light has shot through the gloom, it has burst from the splendor of some individual character, which the goodness of God has permitted to shine upon a benighted world, as if to teach mankind of what it is capable. But when the star has sunk beneath the horizon, it has either left the sphere it illuminated in original darkness, or its path has been marked by a glimmering line of light, to point the way to future improvement. Such was the Anglo-Saxon ALFRED, and such his glorious reign.

During those periods of ignorance and error, what have been called struggles for liberty, have too frequently been mere contests for power, between an encroaching monarch and his bold and haughty nobles. In struggles like these, however bitter the hostility, and however opposed the interests of the contending parties, they have usually united in the sentiment of utter contempt for the rights of the people. Even Magna Charta, to which our English ancestors proudly turn as the bulwark of their freedom, was extorted, sword in hand, from the profligate and cowardly JOHN, by the mail-clad confederates of ROBERT FITZWALTER; and if, among its numerous provisions for the support of aristocratic supremacy and baronial pride, a few are found for the protection of those for whose benefit and by whose hand all governments should be framed, they only serve to show how debased was the situation of those who could humbly and gratefully receive as a boon, infinitely less than they were entitled to demand as a right. Those privileges are little to be boasted of, which are the gratuitous bounties of uncontrollable superiors. But, although the principle of popular freedom was the smallest of all the elements which entered into the composition of the charter of Runnemede, it was destined to produce the most

important results. It was no larger than a grain of mustard-seed, "the least of all seeds," "but, when it was grown, it became a tree," under whose spreading branches and protecting shades the liberties of England securely reposed.

The boundary line of rational freedom lies within the circle of useful knowledge, and as the one expands the other is enlarged. As, therefore, the light of intellectual improvement from time to time has dispersed the clouds of ignorance, and revealed to man his true dignity and real power, the barbarous institutions and still more barbarous opinions by which he was held in subjection, have been compelled to give way before the advance of reason. He was oppressed and humbled, because he knew not what he was; and the lessons which taught him to know and feel his rights, taught him at the same time how to assert them. These rights had gradually gathered weight and force and permanence, at the period when the western world afforded to the oppressed an asylum, and to the bold and enterprising a field for the exercise of their active energies; and if the spirit of freedom had any room to breathe in the artificial atmosphere of Europe, where the luxuries of life and the arts of man and his arbitrary and unequal institutions poisoned its purity and circumscribed its exercise, how much more freely would its aspirations be poured forth, where nature, unfettered and uncontrolled, exhibited her grandest and most imposing features. The glare of wealth and the pomp of power create servility in the mean, and dependency and discontent in the generous; but the sublimities of nature exalt and purify the soul. He who can contemplate the grandeur spread over the face of this magnificent country, without feeling his mind raised to the adoration of the Author of all Good, and his bosom swell with the ennobling feelings of conscious freedom, belongs to a class of beings unworthy of the land they inhabit.

Driven by such causes, or invited by such motives to scenes like these, the spirit and the principles of those who sought these shores as a resting place, would naturally strike their

roots deeply into a soil so admirably calculated to promote their growth. It afforded, therefore, no very strong proof of the political wisdom of their trans-atlantic parent not to have foreseen that tyranny and oppression, instead of subduing the spirit of the slave, would rouse into action the slumbering energies of the free, and sever the bonds of colonial dependence. She chose not, however, the wiser part of conciliation and kindness, but arrogantly and causelessly precipitated a crisis, which sooner or later must have arrived, and forced before the world the extraordinary and interesting spectacle of a number of remote and feeble provinces, with a scanty population spread over an immense extent of territory, without name and without wealth, and without those political ties which could give the force of union to their efforts, but bound together by a sense of common wrongs, and sustained by the influence of a common spirit, bursting at once into the great assembly of nations and claiming among them an equal station. Like the fabled goddess of wisdom and of war, who issued mature in form and armed for battle from her parent's head, there was here no puling infancy, no half-formed inconsiderate youth: the creation was the production of mighty and irresistible principles, and the impress of early manhood was stamped upon it at its birth.

At the commencement of our national existence, all that was good in civil and social relations—all that was valuable in the treasures of science—all that deserved imitation in the political institutions and legal systems of past ages and distant countries was spread before us, and from materials so rich and so abundant, a fabric has been raised, founded on the immutable, but almost forgotten principles of the rights of man. The same celestial spirit, and some of the same illustrious men who dared to proclaim to the astonished world, "that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men,

deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed," have framed a constitution embracing and securing every thing which the wants and the happiness of a free people could require ; and if, under the protection of the roof they have reared, man cannot be secure in the enjoyment of equal " justice, domestic tranquillity, general welfare, and the blessings of liberty," the human race has nothing left to hope for. How far the anticipations of those have been realized who threw themselves into the breach and " devoted their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honour" to the welfare of their country, the unparalleled prosperity and happiness of these United States, since the termination of their revolutionary struggle, abundantly declare. To sketch, even with the most hurried pencil, the leading features of this important period, filled as it has been with events of the most thrilling interest, and crowded with the most distinguished men, would far exceed the limits of my canvass, and call for colours I am unable to command. None but a master's hand could paint the picture.

Let us then turn from the beautiful and cheering retrospect of past events, to a momentary contemplation of our present condition, and cast an anxious eye towards our future fate. The position which our beloved country now occupies, is one of unparalleled interest, not only to those who live under the protection of her laws, but to the whole civilized world. Before the watchful eye of that jealous world, she is now successfully working out a great moral and political problem, in the solution of which all mankind are concerned. If, from unrestrained passions, wild and selfish ambition, sordid cupidity, or the mad rancour of party spirit, it be now decided that man is incapable of living under laws of his own creation, and that nothing but the hard hand of power can restrain him, the hopes of the philanthropic statesman are lost forever ; for never can the great experiment be made again under circumstances so auspicious. Thus far, its success has outrun the fondest anticipations of its most enthusiastic advocates. Within the compass of sixty years from the moment when

this mighty nation announced its determination to be independent, the number of ill-cemented and disjointed states which then struggled for existence has been exactly doubled; and, joined together by the most sacred bond which the wisdom of man ever framed, are in the full fruition of unexampled prosperity. The three millions of inhabitants who then thinly skirted our Atlantic shores, are now swelled to more than five times that amount; and the broad tide of population is poured over the wide and distant regions of the west. The rude shocks of foreign aggression have been triumphantly repelled, and the national character placed on a proud elevation; the flowers of literature have been successfully cultivated within our borders; science has shed her radiant light over our land, and all those useful arts which are directly tributary to the well-being and comfort of man, have received an impulse here, more powerful than in any other portion of the globe. In an age in which more improvements in science and the arts have been compressed within the circle of a few years than the continued efforts of preceding centuries could accomplish, the active, intelligent, and enterprising people of this flourishing country may claim to have done their part. And while they can repose in safety in the enjoyment of unequalled prosperity and happiness, under the protection of the best constituted government the world has ever known, they freely yield to others an unenvied pre-eminence in those splendid luxuries and refined embellishments which the accumulations of aristocratic wealth alone can support.

But if the mind of the philanthropist and the patriot dwell with delight on the beautiful picture of the present, it is lost in enraptured reveries in contemplating what the future may unfold. In every part of Europe the spirit of freedom is abroad, and though often beaten down by the hand of despotic power, or smothered under the oppressive weight of privileged orders, the vital spark can never be extinguished. France, after rushing from the fierce tumults and bloody scenes of popular phrensy into the iron grasp of imperial

despotism, is endeavouring to infuse the spirit of freedom into the remodelled institutions of her ancient monarchy. The venerable and time-honoured edifice of the English constitution shakes with the convulsive throes of the same impatient spirit, seeking to burst its shackles and assert its claim to a voice potential in the councils of the nation. In Germany, many despotic princes have been forced by the resistless power of public opinion, to acknowledge the rights of their people; while, in her numerous universities, the flame is fanned by the breath of young enthusiasts. And even those icy regions where the energies of man are frozen under the benumbing tyranny of a more icy-hearted autocrat, must, sooner or later, feel the genial warmth of the sun-beams of liberty. The very means to which the unfeeling NICHOLAS, and the brutal CONSTANTINE resort to crush the spirit of the unhappy Pole, may send that spirit with the heroic exile into the remotest corner of their empire, and kindle a fire which cannot be extinguished.

But whatever may be the hopes or the fears of those who struggle in the cause of European freedom, their eye is steadily and anxiously fixed on the western world as an example or an asylum. If the progress of liberal opinions should undermine the gothic remains of kings and nobles, and open to their view a country in which captivity may be free, they look to our institutions as the pillar of light which is to guide them to the promised land; but if the overwhelming waves of power should threaten to engulf their dearest hopes, here is the Ararat on which they trust the ark of their political safety may rest. Whether the hopes of mankind are to ride securely in our waters or to be wrecked on the very shores they have sought in their distress, may mainly depend on the events of a few short years, and the principles by which they are directed or controlled. It is hardly too bold an assertion to pronounce, that the present generation hold in their hands the destinies of their country, and they are now to determine whether they shall be for weal or for wo. With a territory of

two millions and an half of square miles, embracing every variety of soil and climate, this vast country is capable of supporting a population of five hundred millions of human beings; not like the ignorant and brutal boors of despotic Russia, or the heathen hordes of besotted China, but a free, intelligent and active race, capable of carrying all the improvements of science, and all the arts of life into every part of this mighty continent, and of spreading the light of the Gospel of truth to its remotest borders. A population, whose natural increase has no parallel, is continually swelled by the floods of foreign emigration; and the time is not far distant, when cultivated fields, and thriving towns, and populous cities will fill the great area, which spreads almost from ocean to ocean, and from the snow-clad mountains of the north, to the burning plains of the south. Connected by all those means of communication, and enriched by all those arts which the wonders of modern ingenuity and science have produced, and which, even yet, seem scarcely to have passed their infancy, the prospect of such a people, enjoying universal happiness and prosperity, under the sanction of just and equal laws, bound together by ties of their own formation, and acknowledging the purifying influences of a divine religion, is almost too great to be embraced by the limited powers of the human mind.

But the heart of the philanthropic patriot trembles and sinks within him when he perceives, that over this sublime and magnificent landscape, hangs a dark and portentous cloud, which threatens to pour forth its fury, and make the whole a dreary and desolate waste. Already the spirit of insubordination to law, of reckless ambition, and of total disregard of all those sanctions by which alone a free people can exist, has made frightful and alarming strides over the fairest portions of our land. The spirit, which, to avenge real or imaginary wrongs, prompted an infuriated mob to level with the earth the private edifices of a neighbouring city, and to despoil, in a burst of popular phrensy, individual

citizens of their property and their peace, is the same which exhibited nearly the whole community of a western town as active performers in the awful scenes of deliberate murder. That spirit is now running riot through the land, threatening to overthrow and destroy, all that we ought to cherish and preserve. It is a poison as deadly to our hopes, as that of the life-destroying Upas, to human existence. If the law cannot vindicate itself, if the pernicious and self-destroying principle is to take root among us, that the supposed will of the people, manifested, no matter how, is to break down the barriers of their own laws, and life, liberty, and property are to be held by the uncertain and dangerous tenure of popular dictation, unregulated and unrestrained by constitutional or legal sanctions, the slave who bends under the yoke of Russian tyranny, or trembles under the scymetar of oriental despotism, is safer, happier, and more free, than he who boasts the proud name of an American citizen. May a merciful and benignant God, chase this accursed plague from our land !

This is the moment at which the monster is to be strangled. If it be permitted to gather strength with years, the many-headed Hydra, can never be destroyed. The pernicious stream may now be dammed by a pebble at its source, and forced back into the vile slough from which it sprang, but its onward course will spread its bitter waters far and wide, wasting and uprooting all that is valuable within its destructive sweep.

But how is the progress of this evil to be arrested ? By the force of a countervailing principle, too powerful for it to contend with. The love of country, strengthened and sustained by respect for the law, and obedience to its precepts, can alone drive this disorganizing demon from our borders, and bind him in his native hell. To those, who mature in years, are mingling in the busy scenes of life, and are not prepared to sacrifice to sordid ambition, and self-aggrandizement, all that is sacred and holy, a word of admonition would be both superfluous

and presumptuous. To depict the evil as it is, to point out its frightful tendencies, and to enforce the duty of destroying it in the cradle, would be to impute to those to whom such precepts are addressed, absolute folly, or absolute depravity. I fully adopt the sentiment of a distinguished German writer, "that of all men, they are guilty of the greatest crime, who would make use of the natural power of our people, for the purposes of destruction and convulsion." And to him, who, forgetful of manly independence, and patriotic duty, would seek advancement by such vile means, I would apply the lines of the Roman satyrist:

"Ille igitur nunquam direxit brachia contra
Torrentem; nec civis erat qui libera posset
Verba animi proferre, et vitam impendere vero."—Juv.

But to the inexperienced minds of youth, filled with generous enthusiasm, and soon to be called, buoyant with hope, into the field of active duty, I may be permitted to point out some of the dangers they are to encounter, and the manner in which they are to be met and overcome. Those who are now passing from scholastic duties to prepare for the pursuits of manly exertion, imbued with the lessons of Grecian and Roman virtue, and with all that elevation of mind which liberal studies ever impart, can scarcely receive the truth, that this fair country, on which the Almighty has showered his choicest bounties, is threatened with distraction, perhaps with destruction, from the abuse of the highest blessing he has permitted us to enjoy. The frightful scenes of lawless riot, of outrage and of murder, with which infuriated and unreasoning mobs have disgraced so many portions of our country, are less dangerous to our existence as a free people, than the startling and blasting doctrines, which are sometimes attempted to be engrafted on our institutions. The disgusting rankness of the one, carries with it, in some degree, its own antidote; while the subtle poison of the other, disguised under a flattering unction, works its way into the very vitals of our

national existence. To say that the people, whose sovereign power no one can dispute, and whose voice, legitimately pronounced, all are bound to obey, may violate all order, break through all rule, resume all grants, "wrest the law from its authority, and bid their will avouch it," is to strike at the very root of civil society, and to open a horrid scene of anarchy, injustice, and outrage. Nor is the principle much less alarming which asserts, that the acts of an existing legislature, vesting rights in individuals or corporate bodies, may be annulled at pleasure by their successors. It is at variance at once, with the dictates of natural justice, and the solemn provisions of the Federal Constitution, which forbid the invasion of contracts, entered into under the sanction of existing laws. As well might the heir of him who has parted with an estate, forcibly reclaim it, upon a mere allegation, with or without foundation, that the price was inadequate, or the conveyance obtained by fraud, and passing by the regularly established tribunals for the determination of such controversies, constitute himself the absolute and final judge of the very question he has raised. The principle shocks our natural sense of justice, and to state it, is to pronounce its condemnation. And to attempt to sustain an act of high-handed and flagrant injustice, by the argument, that the precedent has been already set; that former legislatures have passed the limits of natural justice, and overleaped the barriers of the constitution, is to justify wrong by wrong, and to make one error or crime, the fruitful mother of a hideous brood. Even necessity, the tyrant's plea, cannot be invoked in support of a doctrine which would shake society to its centre. The same wise instrument which conferred on the legislative department of our government, all the faculties necessary to enable it to minister to the well-being of the state, provided another and co-ordinate branch, clothed with ample power to avert the consequences of fraudulent legislation. The separation of the different arms of government, and the formation of balances and checks to regulate and

control the undue action of the several parts of the machine, was not the result of chance, or of hasty and inconsiderate councils. They were the fruit of the deep reflection, the anxious thought, the patient vigils, and the profound research of men, whose hearts were at least as pure, whose heads were at least as clear, and whose patriotism was at least as disinterested, as any these latter days can boast. They foresaw the destructive train of evils, which must issue from an union of all the powers of the state in one body, and endeavoured sedulously to guard against a principle so destructive to good government. Instead, therefore, of intrusting to the legislature the power of determining the character and validity of their own laws, they confided that high function to the judiciary, as a department, enlightened, impartial, and independent, and less likely to be controlled by those personal or party influences which sometimes find their way into the halls of legislation. It is true, the system thus framed, is not incapable of change; and that change may, if the principles of sound and good government can be so far forgotten or disregarded, annihilate all distinction in the different branches of the body politic, and centre all power in a single assembly. But the effect of such an unnatural and dangerous union, would not be to abrogate any right duly vested under the pre-existing form. The instrument which still forms the basis on which the fabric of our state government rests, but which is soon to be swept away, declares the undeniable truth, that "all power is inherent in the people, and all free governments are founded on their authority, and instituted for their peace, safety, and happiness;" and that "for the advancement of these ends, they have at all times an unalienable and indefeisible right to alter, reform or abolish their government, in such manner as they shall think proper." But those who suppose that in the exercise of this acknowledged power, the most sacred rights, which have been vested under the faith of a legitimate government, are to be swallowed up in the vortex into which our civil and political

institutions are to be thrown, should remember that there is a higher power, not only in the force of those immutable principles of truth and justice, *leges legum*, written by the Almighty in the hearts of his intelligent creatures, which forbids the outrage, but in the positive prohibition of constitutional enactments, whose sacred obligations, all are bound to acknowledge. When the Constitution of the United States declared, that "no state shall pass any law, impairing the obligation of contracts," the restriction was necessarily extended to all such enactments, whether they emanated from legislatures then in being, from conventions of the people, or from legislative assemblies to be created by such conventions. The power of remodelling the governments of the individual states, was preserved to their citizens, subject to the limits prescribed by the paramount authority of the Constitution of the United States, beyond which they cannot pass. The states surrendered to the Federal government those rights and those powers which are enumerated in the constitution, and are incapable of recalling them while they continue members of the confederacy. How far a state may withdraw itself from the compact, and become absolutely independent, it is unnecessary to pronounce; but those who contend for the power to rescind a contract, by the supposed omnipotence of a convention, must go the full length of saying, that when a state thus resolves itself into its original elements, it ceases to be a state, and its conventional acts, are not the laws of one of these United States. The reasoning which supports a doctrine such as this, would justify the substitution of an absolute monarchy, for the republican form of government which is guarantied by the constitution to every state in the union.

If the spirit which breathes such doctrines should unhappily find its way into a convention called for the correction of existing abuses, the angel of truth and justice must fly shuddering from its halls, and may find a more congenial atmosphere, in the councils of Pandemonium. All right will

be confounded; all order lost; all justice spurned; and "chaos will come again."

"Touch that string,
And hark, what discord follows! each thing meets
In mere oppugnancy. The bounded waters
Should lift their bosoms higher than the shores,
And make a sop of all this solid globe;
Strength, should be lord of imbecility,
And the rude son, should strike his father dead:
Force, should be right; or rather right and wrong,
(Between whose endless jar justice resides)
Should lose their names, and so should justice too.
Then, every thing includes itself in power;
Power into will, will into appetite;
And appetite, an universal wolf.
So, doubly seconded with will and power,
Must make perforce an universal prey,
And last, eat up himself."—TROIL AND CRESSID.

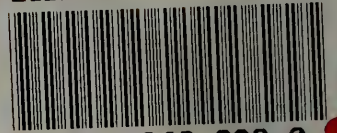
To suppose, however, that the people of this happy country are prepared to tumble from its seat, the beautiful fabric of a just and well-regulated government of laws, and bury under its ruins the most sacred rights of civil society; to make liberty her own destroyer, and to rush into a state of savage anarchy, would infer a calumny not justified by any teachings of experience. Their solid virtues, their stern integrity, their clear understanding, their native sense of right, would make them shrink with horror from scenes so appalling, and form a phalanx round their cherished institutions, which neither the mad folly of mistaken enthusiasts, nor the selfish schemes of designing demagogues, could penetrate or shake.

But, like all other precious gifts, the rich jewel of national liberty, directed and regulated by fair and equal laws, can only be preserved by the untiring and anxious watchfulness of those to whose keeping it is confided. Among the depositories of this great trust, the Graduates of La Fayette College, ere long will take their stand. Within those walls they are now about to leave, crowned with collegiate hon-

ors, they have learned the lessons of hardy industry, sucked the honey of classic literature, imbibed the streams of useful science, received and cherished the sacred precepts of a pure and holy religion; and thus prepared, they enter on the stage of life with all the requisites for usefulness, happiness, and virtue. And if they deem the cause of learning and religion at all essential to the happiness and well-being of their species, they will rally round the constitution of their country as the only power by which they can be preserved; and cling to the horns of their political altar with the devotion of martyrs. That constitution, framed by a concentration of wisdom, virtue, and patriotism, which has challenged the admiration of the world, and has no parallel in the world's history, has been built upon the broad, and deep, and solid foundations of the indefeisible rights of the human race. It has provided every thing for the preservation and enjoyment of those rights, which enlightened intellect and exalted virtue could suggest or imagine; and if, in the imperfection of all human productions, there be defects, which time and experience only can make known, it has within it a power of self-correction, by which those defects may be effectually cured, without striking at the vital principle of its existence. To the youth, then, of our country, who are soon to be its guardians or destroyers, I would say, study its wise and salutary provisions, "*nocturna versate manu, versate diurna*," cherish its exalted principles, support and obey its hallowed precepts, and look forward with confidence, under the protection of an approving Deity, to the happy reign of law, of virtue, and of religion. But, let the wild torrent of unrestrained popular violence break in upon its sanctuary, or the insidious poison of pernicious principles infect its blood, and be prepared to mourn over the ruin of every thing good and holy; and to exclaim,

"*Libertas ultima mundi,
Quo steterit ferienda loco.*"—LUCAN.

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